Press release

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Memorial for man who named clouds

17 April 2002

Met Office television meteorologist Michael Fish this morning unveiled a plaque in memory of Luke Howard - the man who gave clouds their official names. The blue plaque, awarded by English Heritage, received its ceremonial unveiling at the home where Howard spent his final years - 7 Bruce Grove, Tottenham, in the London Borough of Haringey.

In 1802 Howard, a London pharmacist and amateur meteorologist, wrote a book called The Modifications of Clouds and named the various cloud structures he had studied. He used the word hair to describe cirrus, heap for cumulus, layer for stratus and rain-bearing for nimbus. Later he added alto and fracto, meaning middle and broken. The terms were readily accepted by the meteorological community and are still used across the world today.

Emily Cole, Blue Plaques Historian at English Heritage, said: "Luke Howard's work is of key significance to meteorologists worldwide, and deserves to be better known. The plaque is the first to be erected in Tottenham, and will no doubt become a popular feature of the area."

Michael Fish, from the Met Office, said: "Television viewers may not hear us use these terms but as forecasters we use them every day. We are eternally grateful that Luke Howard came up with such an easy and straightforward way of naming clouds."

More about clouds

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